

The Denial of "Holocaust Denial"

The Feast of Misnaming

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Response to the essay "Holocaust denial and the internet" by Michael Curtis (online at *The Commentator*, 21 February 2014)[\[1\]](#)

If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success. When affairs cannot be carried on to success, proprieties and music do not flourish. When proprieties and music do not flourish, punishments will not be properly awarded. When punishments are not properly awarded, the people do not know how to move hand or foot. Therefore a superior man considers it necessary that the names he uses may be spoken appropriately and also that what he speaks may be carried out appropriately. What the superior man requires is just that in his words there may be nothing incorrect.

—Confucius[\[2\]](#)

The purpose of this essay is to show that the call by Michael Curtis for the suppression of "Holocaust denial" on the Internet is thoroughly mischievous and ought to be shunned and rejected by all decent and well-disposed persons.

The first name that needs to be challenged is the first word of all: "Holocaust." In his address to the Institute for Historical Review in 1992 David Irving commented about this term: "It's a word I don't like using..... I mistrust words with a capital letter. They look like a trademark..... You get the impression that it is a neatly packaged, highly promoted operation, and you don't trust it." Richard J. Evans also queried the term and explained why he preferred not to use it.[\[3\]](#) He noted that a holocaust is the bringing of a burnt offering and that the word is inapplicable to the treatment of Jews by Germany during World War Two. As it is currently used, the term seems to have been infused with a kind of magical significance, like an incantation or a positive taboo before which all must bow down. It seems that a correct name for what Curtis wishes to discuss might be "Germany's treatment of Jews during the period of Nazi rule between 1933 and 1945." Notice that such a term lacks glamour and is unwieldy, but that it also *does not beg any questions*. It leaves the topic open for intelligent debate. To use the term "Holocaust" as Curtis does in 2014 is to at once assert an interpretation of the topic without even stating it, let alone defining and defending a particular point of view on it. In short, the term functions as a debate-stopper.

The phrase "Holocaust denial" can now be examined, for it, too, involves misnaming. Everyone knows that the German government between 1933 and 1945 had an anti-Jewish policy to which may be traced much suffering and many deaths for Jews during that time. Very few people in 2014 would argue that that policy was either wise or just, let alone its implementation, which eventually involved injustice and suffering on a massive scale. It may be that the degree and nature of Jewish presence in Germany around 1933 posed some problems for the German people; but, if so, these could have been and should have been dealt with in a different manner altogether.



Confucius (551–479 BC), a Chinese teacher, politician, and philosopher wrote, “If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things...”

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The trouble with the term “Holocaust denial” (a propaganda term if ever there was one) is that it tends to make ignorant persons (the great majority of those upon whom it impinges) imagine that it means a total denial that any such injustice to Jews under Nazi Germany, together with concomitant suffering, ever happened. Thus it becomes easy for propagandists to depict as lunatics or neo-Nazis (or both) those who argue that the currently accepted and officially promoted (and enforced) understanding of the Holocaust needs to be drastically revised, *but by no means completely overturned*. A more honest term to use of defenders of that present understanding is “Holocaust revisionism,” although a more accurate one still would be something like “reassessment of the nature and extent of German

mistreatment of Jews between 1933 and 1945.” Such phraseology sounds boring but has the value of *lacking a potentially misleading emotional charge*.

The essay by Curtis carries a statement under its title as follows: “Everyone conscious of the importance of the free exchange of views is hesitant about banning people’s views.” That is a reasonable assertion, but the next sentence is not. It reads: “But Holocaust denial is different.” No it’s not; it’s “people’s views” just as much as anything else. We have here an old debating trick: the attempt to pretend that there is a difference or distinction when there isn’t one at all.

On the other hand, the writer of the sentence may have meant that “people are not so hesitant about banning the views of ‘Holocaust deniers.’” That is true of some people but not all. There are plenty of people around the world who genuinely believe in and defend intellectual freedom and who recognise clearly that *no topic at all should be protected from debate in public forums*. This includes many people who are not “Holocaust revisionists,” including plenty who are opposed to such views.

It soon becomes apparent that Curtis is an advocate of political censorship of the Internet. His essay involves an outlining of the difficulties involved as well as consideration of what might be achieved along that line.

He wants the “monitoring” of sites to detect “words and images for criminal messages.” He calls for greater “vigilance.” He wants the “exorcism” of “electronic hate, disinformation and global dissemination of malicious transmissions.” This last phraseology also calls for examination. By implication *a question has already been begged*. Putting the matter in our own terms, we can say that Curtis wants to suppress utterances that involve “reassessment of the nature and extent of German mistreatment of Jews between 1933 and 1945” and that he asserts, without offering proof, that such reassessment is motivated by hate, is malicious and involves the spreading of disinformation. Or, to put it another way, he is offering his opinion as though it is fact – another oft-used debating ploy. Moreover, his attack involves the use of *ad hominem* language rather than logical reasoning.

Curtis next genuflects before the ideal of free speech and the First Amendment of the United States Constitution that guarantees freedom of speech and expression. However, his following point amounts to a rejection of that ideal and the principle of that law. He applauds the removal by Google of some videos on one of its sites “that were expressions of denial of the Holocaust.” These were produced by Vincent Reynouard, a French revisionist. Curtis justifies this removal as not “a denial of free speech” but as correct observation of the law by the removal of “criminal” material.

Confucius inveighs us to examine that word “criminal.” It may be that Reynouard’s videos did break a current law in one or more countries, but we are entitled to ask whether such a law was just. Not all laws are just. If, then, the law can be shown to be unjust, then the justification for the removal fails (ethically, if not legally). It is highly likely that investigation would show that the law *is* unjust, that it involves an unwarranted interference with free speech, and that it was put in place as a result of influence from those actively promoting the current view of “the Holocaust.”

Curtis spends some time describing the character of Reynouard himself. The man is said to have “fled” to Belgium (“left” would have been a less prejudicial word) to avoid jail in France for his “hate proclamations.” This brings up another name that may need to be rectified. It is likely that Reynouard’s videos were offering a “reassessment of the nature and extent of German mistreatment of Jews

between 1933 and 1945,” but that they were not expressing hatred (a very strong negative emotion) at all. Why do we say this? It is because there is evidence that for a century or more now propagandists have termed as “hatred” theses they wish to suppress (rather than argue against logically in public forums). For example, David Duke quotes a passage from the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* to the effect that, when the Russian civil war ended (shortly after the Bolshevik revolution), “a law was passed against ‘incitement to hatred and hostility of a national or religious nature,’” which was really designed to protect the revolutionaries, the majority of whom were Jewish.[\[4\]](#)

Curtis writes that Reynouard is “notorious” (a prejudicial term) for having been “convicted on a number of occasions.” Again, we may suspect that the law or laws under which he was convicted are themselves unjust and an affront to intellectual freedom. “Over and over again he has disputed the fact that crimes against humanity were committed against Jews.” Here is another questionable statement. The term “crimes against humanity” was invented in 1945 to make possible the Nuremberg Trials, which Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court Harlan Stone[\[5\]](#) described as “a high-grade lynching party.” Reynouard may well have opposed such legal adventurism and some of the claims it was used to enforce, without, however, stating that no crimes at all were inflicted on the Jews under Nazi rule.

Apparently Reynouard has labelled the current understanding of “the Holocaust” as “a myth” and denied that the Nazis used gas chambers to execute prisoners. In short, he has offered a different “assessment of the nature and extent of German mistreatment of Jews between 1933 and 1945;” but to say that does not automatically prove that he has done wrong.

Reynouard in some respects is a soft target. Curtis states that the man has called himself a National Socialist and taken Hitler as his “hero” and a man who “embodied the hope of Europe in the face of the ruinous ideals of 1789.” Well, one can be opposed to the French Revolution without necessarily being an admirer of Hitler and a National Socialist of any kind. Nevertheless, Curtis has effectively called into question Reynouard’s political judgement at this point. There are plenty of other eminent “Holocaust revisionists,” however, from Paul Rassinier to Carlo Mattogno and Germar Rudolf, who have no taint of admiration for Nazism whatever. Curtis has been selective to the point of bias in focusing on Reynouard.

Even so, Reynouard appears to have been made to sound a much worse person than he really is. Perhaps some of his utterances are truthful and he has been courageous in expressing them in an excessively and unjustly hostile climate.

Curtis mentions two Belgian laws which prompted Google to engage in censorship. One is “against racism and xenophobia” and one “against public denial of the Holocaust.” The latter “bans utterances that deny, grossly minimize, attempt to justify or approve the genocide committed by Nazi Germany during World War Two.” It is highly likely that both laws are fundamentally unjust and that they impinge excessively and wrongfully on intellectual freedom. “Racism” is a highly prejudicial term; and “xenophobia” may well have been employed to enable censorship of anti-immigration theses. The second law plainly intrudes on public debate by taking as fact (“the genocide committed by Nazi Germany”) an assertion that is strongly disputed by Holocaust revisionists. Again, it is highly likely that research would show that such laws were imposed as the result of pressure by those who promote the current view of the relevant period of history.

Curtis confirms that he is not a defender of free speech by happily noting that several European countries have passed laws “making denial of the Holocaust or expounding anti-Semitic beliefs a

criminal offense.” The term “anti-Semitic” is another name that Confucius would want us to examine very closely; adverse criticism of Jewish individuals and groups in various contexts may prove to be perfectly reasonable – and such may be true of “reassessment of the nature and extent of German mistreatment of Jews between 1933 and 1945.”

Curtis relies on the London Charter or Agreement of 8th August 1945, which provided the “legal” basis for the Nuremberg Trials. A powerful exposure of the injustice involved in both the Agreement and the Trials was published by British jurist (and former member of the British Union of Fascists) F. J. P. Veale in his 1948 book *Advance to Barbarism*.^[6] Curtis also relies on the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 17th July 1998, which may also well be able to be shown to be unjust or, at least, poorly drafted, and which may also have been effectively brought into existence by the promoters of the present official version of “the Holocaust.” Curtis quotes the statute as pronouncing that the “crimes against humanity” it has established “are particularly odious offenses in that they constitute a serious attack on human dignity or grave humiliation, or a degradation of human beings,” *but he does not provide any evidence or argument to support this claim*. “Antisemitism”, he writes, “is incompatible with democracy and human rights,” a statement in which all three terms cry out for exact definition. (One recalls Shakespeare’s words given to Macbeth: “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”)

Curtis relies, too, on the 26th January 2007 Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly “condemning without reservation any denial of the Holocaust as an historical event,” but neglects to consider *whether this was not a political rather than an academic or intellectual utterance which merely testifies to the current political clout of the “Holocaust lobby.”* It is doubtful whether the UNO could find any ethical basis whatever for its apparently claimed right to decide what may or may not be said about a historical event or series of events. Stretching the art of the *non sequitur* to a remarkable degree, the US representative at the time, Curtis reports, wanted the assembly to “stress that to deny the events of the Holocaust was tantamount to approval of genocide in all its forms.” That is to say, reassessment of the nature and extent of German mistreatment of Jews between 1933 and 1945 equals 100% approval of genocide in every possible case. It can be seen that Confucian analysis exposes here a grotesque absurdity. How could anyone take it seriously? (The answer, of course, might be fear of, or inducement by, worldly power – or possession by fanaticism.)

“Holocaust denial,” Curtis insists, “is not protected by freedom of speech, nor can freedom of speech be used to dispute punishment for crimes against humanity.” Leaving aside the inadequacy of his language, which we have already established, we can affirm that *the exact opposite is true: critics of the current understanding of “the Holocaust” and critics of the London Agreement of 1945 and the Nuremberg Trials are perfectly entitled to rely on the principle of intellectual freedom to allow them to have their say.*

Any laws which assert otherwise are *morally worthless* and this includes the French Gayssot Law of 13th July 1990, which was formulated principally to enable attack on Professor Robert Faurisson, and which Curtis also invokes. It needs to be noted, too, that, as Confucius might have said, *even if a thousand unjust laws unjustly forbid and punish something, that does not make the forbidding and punishing just.*

Other legal decisions cited by, and approved by, Curtis include those against Yahoo in May 2000 forbidding the auction of Nazi memorabilia on its Website, and the 12th February 2014 order against Dieudonne M’Bala M’Bala to remove part of a video from YouTube.

Curtis refers ungenerously to David Irving, Fred Leuchter, David Duke, Ernst Zündel, Robert Faurisson and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as “notorious figures” and even adds (for the Iranian) the word “malevolent.” This again is the use of *ad hominem* insults, not intellectual argument.

More ominously, Curtis states that such men (and others, no doubt) “should be required to abide by the law of the countries in which they post messages and should be held accountable if they break them.” *He does not explain why they should not be answered by intellectual debate rather than power-based political suppression.* Curtis hopes that “electronic media corporations” will “establish mechanisms to monitor their websites for such illegal hate postings.” Our Confucian analysis enables us to decode this advocacy: *he wishes to extend an ethically dishonest reign of intellectual oppression of those who in good conscience and after much research wish to publish important reassessments of the nature and extent of German mistreatment of Jews between 1933 and 1945.*

“This is not censorship or limitation of free speech,” he asserts. Nonsense! It is exactly that. “This is a legal obligation as well as a moral principle,” he adds. Not so. *Nations and their statesmen have an ethical obligation to ensure that free speech on sensitive religious, political and historical topics is maintained and that the law and laws are not unjustly used to inhibit such freedom of discussion.*

We are told that Curtis, author of *Jews, Antisemitism and the Middle East*, is Distinguished Professor Emeritus in Political Science at Rutgers University, the author of thirty books and a widely respected authority on the Middle East. How can such a man bring himself to the promulgation of such illiberal sentiments?

Notes:

- [1] Online: http://www.thecommentator.com/article/4745/holocaust_denial_and_the_internet
- [2] *Analects*, Book XIII Chapter 3, Verses 4-7, translated by James Legge.
- [3] Richard J. Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow* (New York: Pantheon, 1989), footnote on p. 141.
- [4] David Duke, *The Secret Behind Communism* (Mandeville La.: Free Speech Press, 2013), p. 96.
- [5] Michael J. Kelly and Timothy L. H. McCormack, “The Nuremberg Trial and the Subsequent Development of International Law.” In Blumenthal and McCormack, *The Legacy of Nuremberg: Civilising Influence or Institutionalised Vengeance?* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2008), p. 104.
- [6] F. J. P. Veale, *Advance to Barbarism*, republished as Volume One of *The Veale File*, (Torrance Calif.: Institute for Historical Review, 1979).

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